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## XVI.—THE BOOK OF THE COURTYER:

### A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF BENEDICK AND BEATRICE.

“The best book that ever was written upon good breeding, *Il Cortegiano*, by Castiglione, grew up at the little Court of Urbino, and you should read it,” says Dr. Johnson to Boswell, of all places in the world, in the Isle of Skye, “roving among the Hebrides at sixty.” But when, in the Life of Addison, we find the *Courtyer* classed with *Galateo*, and compared with the social essays of the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*, it becomes clear that the Great Cham was so ignorant of the law he was laying down in this instance, that he took *Il Cortegiano* for a courtesy-book, a book of etiquette:—

“To teach the minuter decencies and inferior duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, to remove those grievances which, if they produce no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by Casa in his book of manners, and Castiglione in the *Courtier*.” (Works, VII, 428, *Addison*.)

William Michael Rossetti, writing of Italian Courtesy-Books for the Early English Text Society, enumerates ten or a dozen such books, ranging from the *Tesoretto* of Brunetto Latini, in 1265, the year of Dante’s birth, to Giovanni della Casa’s *Galateo*, of about 1550. He includes *Il Cortegiano*, but calls attention to the fact that it contains but one reference, and that an incidental one, to what Dr. Johnson calls “the minuter decencies” of life. It is among the facetiae, and recalls to some of those who had been present an incident that happened at the dinner-table of Federico Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. It is precisely because *Il Cortegiano* is not a mere courtesy-book that it has borne so well the judg-

ment of time, and become the best book on manners that ever was written.

For several years I have carefully kept account of all the editions and reprints of *Il Cortegiano* that I have met with, and so far I have noted<sup>1</sup> 142 impressions, in six languages. Appearing at Venice, in 1528, *Il Cortegiano* was first translated into French nine years later by Jacques Colin, secretary to Francis I, with a commendatory epistle to Mellin de Saint-Gelais. It was turned into Spanish, in 1534, by Juan Boscán Almogaver at the instance of his fellow-poet, Garcilaso de la Vega, and into German, by Lorenz Kratzer, in 1565-6. It 'became an Englishman,' in 1561, at the hands of Thomas Hoby, who, as Sir Thomas Hoby, died Elizabeth's ambassador to France. An Elizabethan Latin translation, by Bartholomew Clerke, ran to seven editions, while two different English translations appeared in the eighteenth century. Sir Thomas Hoby's version has been far and away the most enduring Elizabethan translation from the Italian; a reprint of it, appropriately edited by Walter Raleigh, is one of the *Tudor Translations* of last year. Hoby's English limps behind the courtly grace of the Italian, and it is at times inaccurate, but it is throughout sympathetic, and is on the whole an excellent piece of work. In my own case, I find I get the feeling of Castiglione best, if I quote from Hoby who lacked but a few years of being his contemporary, than if I try to put the sixteenth century Italian into my nineteenth century English.

Somewhat of the unique excellence of *Il Cortegiano* is due to the fact that it is the work of a life, practically the sole 'heir of the author's invention.' Whatever Baldassare Castiglione had known, and experienced, and thought, and felt, he set down, refined and philosophised, in his book. Indeed, a criticism of his own time was that he had fashioned

<sup>1</sup> For the latest information on this point, Oct. 2, 1901, I am indebted to Mr. Leonard E. Opdycke, who will publish a complete bibliography of *Il Cortegiano*, in his new English translation, now going through the De Vinne Press, for Charles Scribner's Sons.

himself in his *Courtyer*, nor did he wholly deny the charge, replying with dignity,—

“Unto these men I will not cleane deny that I have attempted all that my mynde is the Courtier shoulde have knowleadge in. And I thinke who so hath not the knowleage of the thinges intreated upon in this booke, how learned so ever he be, he can full il write them.” When Castiglione died, as Apostolic Nuncio of Pope Clement VII. to Charles V., the Emperor is reported to have said, “I tell you one of the finest gentlemen in the world is dead.” The biography of Castiglione has then a two-fold interest; it reveals *Il Cortegiano* in the making, and it shows the aesthetic temperament allowing the creature of its imagining to control the practical conduct of life.

Baldassare Castiglione was born at Casatico, in the Mantuan territory, in 1478. His father, Cristoforo, Count of Castiglione, was captain of a troop in the service of the Marquis of Mantua; his mother, Luigia Gonzaga, was cousin to the Marquis and to his sister, that Elizabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, whose praises are so devotedly chanted in *Il Cortegiano*. His early education was conducted by his mother, who was the intimate friend of Isabella d’Este, Marchioness of Mantua, one of the most learned and brilliant women of the Renaissance. Later he was sent to the Court of Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, called Il Moro, whose wife, the beautiful Beatrice d’Este, was Isabella’s sister, and it was here, with a diplomatic career in view, that he acquired his two-sided education. He became a learned soldier, and a cultivated man of the world. The Moro was a splendid patron of art, and we can fancy the clever boy, sensitive to the beauty of the arts, going of a morning to Santa Maria delle Grazie to talk with Leonardo while he was slowly painting the Last Supper, “for,” says Matteo Bandello, who was then a novice in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria, “this excellent painter always liked to hear people give their opinions freely on his pictures.” Doubtless the young

courtier was more interested in the artist's great equestrian statue of Duke Francesco Sforza, which he was modelling in the Corte Vecchia from drawings of the big jennet and Sicilian horse of Messer Galeazzo Sanseverino, mentioned in Book I. of the *Courtyer* as master of horse to the French king. Messer Galeazzo's brother, Gaspare, known by his sobriquet of Captain Fracassa, was as famous for his rough manners as Galeazzo was the model of chivalric graces. He is supposed to be the nameless warrior of Book I, who rudely repulsed Caterina Sforza's invitation to join in dance and song, because war was his profession. Caterina wittily replied, that since no war was stirring, nor the Milanese Court a proper field for war, she thought Messer Capitano might well be besmeared and set up with other implements of war in an armory, lest, she adds, "you waxe more rustier than you are." At Milan Castiglione also met Bramante, who was building the matchless cupola over the apse of Santa Maria at the same time that Leonardo was painting the *Cenacolo* in the Refectory. Cristoforo Romano, one of the best artists whom the Duke of Milan had in his employ, was then working on the *Certosa*, the great Carthusian church and monastery at Pavia, which Il Moro called the jewel of his crown. Cristoforo is that artist of the *Courtyer*, who in the First Book defends sculpture as superior to painting, not without a touch of human nature withal,—

"I beleave verelye," he says to the Count of Canossa, "you thynke not as ye speake, and all this do you for your Raphaelles sake."

With the entry of Louis XII. into Milan, in October, 1499, the bright youth of Baldassare Castiglione was over. The French king entered the city in a triumphal procession, the dukes of Ferrara and Savoy riding beside him, Cardinals della Rovere and d'Amboise in front, and a goodly array of princes, nobles, and ambassadors following in his train. Castiglione was one of these, in the suite of his kinsman, the Marquis of Mantua. When the pageant was all over, he sat

down and wrote a letter to his mother, describing with boyish enthusiasm the pomp and splendor of the scenes he had witnessed, and the coming man is felt in his regret for the change that had come to the Castello. Once those halls and courts had been the haunt of rare intellects and great artists; now they were occupied by the rude French soldiery who made a target of the great horse on which Leonardo had spent the best years of his life. In Book I. Castiglione tells us how the Frenchmen held learning in small esteem, in Hoby's racy Elizabethan, "all learned men they count verie rascalles, and they think it a great vilany whan any one of them is called a clarke."

The fall of Milan precipitated Castiglione into that turmoil of Italian politics, which, except for the brief respite of three and a half years at the Court of Urbino, he was to rise with and lie down with for the rest of his life. The Courtyer's academic education was ended; now he became an actor in a great and troubled drama, in which the Pope, the Emperor, the King of France, Venice, Florence, Naples, and the smaller Italian states in turn occupy the stage. Castiglione first entered the service of his kinsman, Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, and passed thence to the Court of Giudobaldo, Duke of Urbino, urged to the step in the first instance by the natural desire to be with his cousin and friend, Cesare Gonzaga, who is one of the young lords of the *Courtyer*. *Il Cortegiano* is the story of his calm and happy life at Urbino, which lasted from September, 1504, to the death of Duke Giudobaldo in April, 1508.

At Urbino Castiglione occupied himself partly with letters, partly with diplomacy. He wrote elegant verse in Latin elegiacs, and composed an eclogue, *Tirsi*, for the entertainment of the Court. He was frequently sent on diplomatic missions, once to King Louis XII., of France, at Milan, and once, in the autumn of 1506, to the English Court, whence he carried back from Henry VII. the Order of the Garter for his master, Duke Giudobaldo, and received for himself

“a carcanet of price.” This visit to England is alluded to twice in the *Courtyer*: in Book I. he feigns that he was not present at the *conversazioni* he reports, for the reason that he was at the time absent in England; in Book IV. he represents himself as writing from England what seems rather extravagant praise of Henry VIII. as Prince of Wales, ‘in this prince nature seemed trying to outdo herself,’ “planting in one body alone so many excellent vertues, as were sufficient to decke out infinit.”

Either at Urbino, or subsequently in Rome, representing the Duke at the papal Court of Leo X., Castiglione probably came to know intimately most of the personages of the *Courtyer*. In 1505, Pietro Bembo had brought out his book of dialogues on the miseries and joys of lovers, entitled *Gli Asolani*, and had dedicated it to Lucrezia Borgia. The third book of *Gli Asolani* sets forth Bembo’s ideas on Platonic love, and suggested to Castiglione his magnificent praise of ideal love at the close of the Fourth Book of the *Courtyer*. Another ecclesiastic at Urbino was Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, whose gay comedy, *Calandra*, was, like *Tirsi*, written for the delectation of the Court. This play of mistaken identities is the Italian double of the *Comedy of Errors*, both tracing to the *Menaechmi* of Plautus. Very fittingly Bibbiena conducts the conversation of the second evening on wit and humor.

After the death of Giuliano de Medici, the Lord Julian of the *Courtyer*, who was a good friend to the house of Urbino, his brother, Pope Leo X., seized upon the duchy of Urbino for his nephew Lorenzo, and Castiglione’s ministry in Rome came to an abrupt end. The Duke of Urbino fled to Mantua, whence Castiglione followed, to enter into the service of Federico Gonzaga, son and successor to his early master. The young Marquis sent him back to Rome to represent Mantua at the Courts of Adrian VI. and Clement VII. During the closing years of Castiglione’s life Charles V. and Francis I. were playing their great game of chess for

the mastery of Europe. Pope Clement VII., as a mere bishop, found himself a less important piece than he liked, so he borrowed Castiglione from the Marquis of Mantua, and sent him on an embassy to the Emperor at Madrid, characteristically entrusting him with secret messages to the French king, at Pavia, on the way. At Pavia, in 1525, 'all was lost save honor,' and the sack of Rome followed in 1527. Castiglione fell between two stools; he was duped by the wily Emperor and discredited with the Pope. He survived his ill fortune a little more than a year, and died, at Toledo, on February 7, 1529. He was buried in the chapel of the Madonna delle Grazie at Mantua, where Giulio Romano built his monument and Bembo inscribed it. Raphael painted at least two portraits of Baldassare Castiglione: one of them is in the Louvre; the other, a full length portrait, appears in one of the frescoes in the Stanze of the Vatican. It is the picture of an Italian nobleman of distinguished bearing, who looks out upon the world with grave, clear eyes, and an open, tranquil countenance.

*Il Cortegiano* revolved in Castiglione's mind just twenty years. His own statement is that he made the first rough sketch of it, "in a few days," in 1508, "whyle the savour of the vertues of Duke Giudobaldo was fresh in my mynde, and the great delite I took in those yeeres in the loving companie of so excellent Personages as then were in the Court of Urbin." The book was published, at Venice, in 1528, coming to light at last in what its author considered an imperfect state, through a misunderstanding with Vittoria Colonna. What further perfections Castiglione might have added to *Il Cortegiano*, it is impossible to say; what he has left us is one of those books, not too numerous in any language, in which the style suits the subject. It is a large subject, a subject of infinite variety,—the education of a gentleman,—treated in a broad, philosophical, eminently human way, and written in the choicest Italian prose. Taking his literary form from the dialogues of Plato and the



*De Oratore* of Cicero, Castiglione added to it the aesthetic social setting of the Renaissance. The result is a running dialogue, in narrative form, dramatically interspersed with gay stories, delicate interruptions, combats of wit, repartee, and serious monologues, which at times, as in the passages on music and painting, rise to lyrical elevation of feeling. The author professes to give an account of certain *conversazioni*, rightly so called, which were held at the Court of Urbino during the month of March, 1507. The interlocutors were ladies and gentlemen who were then enjoying the hospitality of the Duke and Duchess. Among these personages the chief are Giuliano de' Medici, called the Magnifico, son of Lorenzo de' Medici, and brother to Pope Leo X.; Ottaviano Fregoso, afterwards the wise, but unfortunate, Doge of Genoa who died in prison at Ischia; his brother, Messer Federico Fregoso, later titular Archbishop of Salerno; Count Lodovico of Canossa, Bishop of Bayeux (1520); Pietro Bembo, secretary to Pope Leo X., and cardinal, and author of *Gli Asolani*; Bernardo da Bibbiena, cardinal, and author of *Calandra*; Aretino, called here l'Unico Aretino; and Giovan Cristoforo Romano, the sculptor. The ladies who take leading parts are the Duchess of Urbino, born Elizabetta Gonzaga, and the Lady Emilia Pia, Countess of Montefeltro. The conversations continue through four successive evenings, and are conducted with great decorum, under the personal oversight of the Duchess. She designates a different gentleman to conduct the debate each evening, and deposes her own authority in matters of detail to the Lady Emilia Pia. The device of a deputy mistress of ceremonies, so far as I know, is Castiglione's own, and it adds greatly to the success of his dialogue. The Lady Emilia is a charming woman, who possesses at once quick intelligence, good judgment, and a lively wit. If the talk becomes discursive, it is her duty to bring it back to the point; if personalities enter into it, her womanly instinct interposes to keep the peace; if it grows dull, a bright flash

of wit enlivens the situation. In short, the Lady Emilia keeps the conversation well in hand, and with that exquisite social tact which, it is said, only women acquire, she plays off one person against another, so as to bring out the best each has to offer.

The subject, "a good Courtyer, specifying all suche conditions and particuler qualities, as of necessitie must be in hym that deserveth this name," is that proposed by Messer Federico Fregoso. It is discussed under the general heads, the qualifications of a Courtyer and their use, the qualifications of a Court lady, and the end of a Courtyer, especially in his relations to his prince.

It is a mixed type of manners that Castiglione describes, in that the education of letters of the Renaissance is engrafted upon the military discipline of feudal times. "Armes," he says, is "the Courtyer's chiefe profession"; and again, "I hould opinioun that it is not so necessary for any man to be learned, as it is for a man of war." As to other matters, the Courtyer ought to be well born, for the philosophical reason that good birth is esteemed by all men, and is therefore, in a worldly sense, a natural vantage ground. Following the chivalric ideal, great stress is put upon the training of the body, and particularly on horsemanship; the Courtyer must be "a perfecte horseman for everye saddle." The pattern of knighthood in all athletic exercises whom Castiglione had before his eyes was Galeazzo Sanseverino, son-in-law to the Moro. As a rider and joustier Galeazzo was without rival. Strong, active, graceful, it is said that in complete armor he could mount a horse at full gallop, and wherever he entered the lists, at Milan, or Venice, or Ferrara, or Urbino, he invariably came off victor. He was captain of horse for the Duke of Milan, and for two French kings, and fell, gallantly leading his troop, at Pavia.

In the education of letters, the Courtyer should be able to speak and write well, imitating the diction of the best writers, of whom, in the vulgar tongue, Boccaccio and Petrarch are

praised as models, but are not to be slavishly followed. Further, the perfect Courtyer ought to be more than moderately instructed in polite letters, he should "have not only the understanding of the Latin tunge, but also of the Greeke, because of the many and sundrye thinges that with greate excellencye are written in it." So in the other arts of expression, the Courtyer ought to know music, to be able to sing at sight and to play on various instruments; he ought also to have a practical knowledge of drawing and painting. Better even than singing at sight is singing solo to the lute, and most especially thus singing in recitative, "for it addeth to the wordes suche a grace and strength, that it is a great wonder." As to grace and force of expression, Castiglione speaks well of gesturing; he commends those story-tellers who 'relate and express so pleasantly something which may have happened to them, or which they have seen or heard, that with gestures and words they set it before your eyes, and make you almost lay your hand upon it.' Grace, Castiglione writes of, like a past master in the art. There is a grace beyond the reach of art in "that pure and amiable simplicity which is so agreeable to the minds of men." And again, "who so hath grace, findeth grace." It is a truism to say that courtesy is a matter of feeling; good manners express good thoughts. So, with Castiglione whose ethical idea is Aristotelian, grace passes into virtue, the most artistic expression of all sorts is that of freedom under the law. It is difficult to reconcile the lofty moral tone of *Il Cortegiano* with the era of pagan popes in which it first saw the light; it is, however, only fair to the penetration of those popes to say that they recognized the difference between it and themselves, and promptly put the book in the Index Expurgatorius. Castiglione was a distinguished diplomat of Machiavelli's own time, and he says,—"To purchase favour at great mens handes, there is no better waye then to deserve it." The first interest of a prince, according to Machiavelli, is to find out the truth. The chief end of the Courtyer, says

Castiglione, is to tell it. "I woulde not lyke that oure Courtyer shulde at anye tyme use anye deceyte."

A brave man, a cultivated man, a good man, such is the portrait of the Courtyer, painted by the personal friend of Raphael, and Raphaelesque in manner. The outlines are bold and free, the filling in is done with all that clearness of vision, love of detail, and positiveness that differentiates the Italians of the Renaissance from the men of every other race and time. The skill with which the lights and shadows of the portrait, the literary perspective of the dialogue, is managed, is beyond praise; the longest digressions occur on different evenings, that on language on the first evening, on facetiae, on the second, while Bembo's rhapsody on Platonic love closes the book. As to the vexed question of the ancients or the moderns in speech, we find Castiglione writing his exquisite Italian on the sound principle that those words are the best which express the thought in the clearest way, the simplest language is the most passionate. In other words, style is personality; if you have anything worth saying, and if you yourself are of worth, you can say it to be understood, and remembered, of men.

Bibbiena's discourse on facetiae is a storehouse of good things—good stories, good epigrams, good criticism. This part of *Il Cortegiano* is modelled closely on the second book of Cicero's *De Oratore*. Some of the stories even are Cicero's, but most of them are of Castiglione's own time. The anecdotes savor more of wit than of humor, the trick of incongruity is rather intellectual than physical; indeed, it is expressly laid down that horseplay is unbecoming in a gentleman. Nor, barring the plainer speech of earlier times, are the facetiae indelicate. The Italian expurgated editions show that the Church very likely indexed *Il Cortegiano* on account of the stories told at the expense of ecclesiastics, most of them by that "fellow of infinite jest," Cardinal Bibbiena himself. Many jests deal with ninnies, as that of the simple citizen of Florence, who, when the exchequer

was empty, proposed to replenish it, either by doubling the number of gates at which toll could be charged, or by establishing two additional mints, and coining money day and night, and the last he thought the speedier means of growing rich. One of the best stories is told of a Lucchese merchant, who went into Poland to buy sables. Coming to the river Borysthenes (Dnieper), his Polish servants found themselves unable to understand the Muscovite fur-traders on the other side, because, it is alleged, the weather was so cold that their words froze in the air before they got across. So the Poles built a fire on the ice in the middle of the river, and in about an hour, the Muscovite words thawed out, and came down, "making a noise as doeth the snow from the mountaignes in May." Note with what apparent unconsciousness, but with what real art, the pretty phrase, 'making a noise as doeth the snow from the mountaignes in May' is set in this funny story. All Castiglione's figures are simple, some of them are exquisitely graceful. Speaking of cultivating grace, he says, "as the bee in the green meadow buzzes about choosing out flowers, so shall the Courtyer seek grace from every one that has it." So reason, overcome by desire, is finely described in the figure of a ship driven before the storm. Temperance followeth reason, "like a tender lambe that renneth, standeth and goith alwaies by the ewes side, and moveth only as he seeth her do." A picturesque turn of thought introduces the conversation on wit and humor. The Lady Emilia excuses Messer Federico Fregoso for a time from discussing the qualifications of the Courtyer, while the company listens to Bernardo da Bibbiena on jests,—

"Madam," says Messer Federico, "I knowe not what I have lefte beehinde anie more, but lyke a travailer on the waye now weerie of the peinefulnesse of my longe journey at noone tide, I will reste me in Messer Bernardes communication at the sowne of hys woordes, as it were under some faire tree that casteth a goodlye shadowe at the sweete roaringe of a plentifull and livelye springe."

It is impossible to speak too highly of the artistic setting of the four evenings' conversation, sparkling with every variety of graceful interlude, from grave to gay; now a pleasing metaphor, now a jest, a drollery, a skirmish of wit, a dramatic episode. The dedication, to the Bishop of Viseo, chants a miserere for the Duchess of Urbino,—“But the thinge that should not be rehersed wythout teares, is, that the Dutchesse, she also is dead.” So the introduction to the Fourth Book bewails the death of three of the personages of the dialogue, all young men dying with the promise of life fresh upon them. Almost immediately the company assembles, and it is found that Ottoviano Fregoso, who is to lead the conversation, is a little late in arriving; to relieve the tedium of waiting two of the young men just spoken of engage two of the ladies in a dance.

Near the close of the First Book Cesare Gonzaga is talking of the beauty of women,—

“And then was hard a great scraping of feet in the floore with a cherme of loud speaking, and upon that every man tourninge him selfe about, saw at the Chambre doore appeare a light of torches, and by and by after entred the Lord Generall with a greate and noble traine, who was then retourned from accompaninge the Pope a peece of the waye.”

On the fourth evening Bembo's impassioned monologue on love and beauty held the company spellbound until dawn broke,—

“Whan the windowes then were opened on the side of the Palaice that hath his prospect toward the high top of Mount Catri, they saw alredie risen in the East a faire morninge like unto the coulour of roses, and all sterres voided, savinge onelye the sweete Governesse of the heaven, Venus, whiche keapeth the boundes of the nyght and the day, from whiche appeered to blowe a sweete blast, that filling the aer with a byting cold, begane to quicken the tunable notes of the pretty birdes, among the hushing woodes of the hilles at hande.

Wherupon they all, takinge their leave with reverence of the Dutchesse, departed toward their lodgings without torche, the light of day sufficing."

A striking excellence of Castiglione's style is its Dantesque quality of seeing clear and thinking straight. This enables him to pack his thought into those pithy sentences which abound throughout *Il Cortegiano*, and which translate with extraordinary precision into the plain Tudor prose of Hoby.

"Wisdome," says Castiglione, "consisteth in a certaine judgement to chouse well."

"But the seasoning of the whole muste bee discreation."

"He that can commaunde is alwayes obeyed."

"True pleasure is alwaies good, and true sorow, evell."

And above all, the admirable summing up of the duties of a Courtyer, "to speake and to do."

There is much evidence among the Elizabethans of the vogue of the Courtyer. Ascham, in the *Scholemaster*, advises young men to read Castiglione, instead of going to Italy to mar their manners. Marston (*Satires* and *The Malcontent*) refers to him ironically as "the absolute Castilio." Webster and Dekker quote him in *Westward Hoe*. Ben Jonson, speaking, in *Timber*, of style, observes that life is added to writing by resort to epigrams, witticisms, repartee, "such as are in the *Courtier*, and the second book of Cicero *De Oratore*." Just here we are confronted with the familiar crux, did Shakspeare know the Courtyer? Is it possible that the greatest of the Elizabethans, living through the time when translations from the Italian were "solde in every shop in London," was ignorant of one of the oldest and best and most popular of them?

One of the most familiar of Castiglione's stories, alluded to in one way or another by Peacham, Nash, Taylor the Water-Poet, Hall, and Ben Jonson, is that of the penurious farmer who made a corner in grain, and then hanged himself when the price of the commodity went down, instead of up. Prof. Walter Raleigh thinks the porter in *Macbeth* was thinking of this story when he said,—

“Here’s a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty : come in time.”

He also suggests that Polonius’s advice to Laertes bears the ear-marks of the *Courtyer*, especially in the matter of dress.

George Wyndham (*Introduction to the Poems of Shakspeare*) considers Spenser’s *Hymne in Honour of Beautie* but a versifying of the Fourth Book of the *Courtyer*, and goes on to argue interestingly that Shakspeare must have taken, from this *Hymne*, and from the *Courtyer*, the Platonic philosophy of the *Sonnets*. Plato’s theory of Beauty, so eloquently expounded by Bembo, that the world and all that is in it, are but reflections of the Heavenly Beauty is expressed in a few lines in one of the poems of Michael Angelo :—

Lo, all the lovely things we find on earth,  
 Resemble, for the soul that rightly sees,  
 That source of bliss divine which gave us birth :  
 Nor have we first-fruits or remembrances  
 Of heaven elsewhere. Thus, loving loyally,  
 I rise to God, and make death sweet, by thee.

Shakspeare, being Shakspeare, varies the Platonic theory. For him, the friend’s beauty is no longer the reflection of Heavenly Beauty, but, with overwhelming insistence, it displaces the Eternal Beauty, and becomes itself the substance of which all beautiful things are but shadows. He writes, in the Fifty-third Sonnet,

What is your substance, whereof are you made  
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend ?

I agree with Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Raleigh that Shakspeare knew the *Courtyer*, and I would suggest as evidence of that fact that he found in it Benedick and Beatrice in the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino and the Lady Emilia Pia. Wherever Shakspeare lit upon the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the remote source of it is Bandello’s twentieth *novella*,

*How Signor Timbreo di Cardona became enamoured of Fenicia Lionata and of the various and unlooked for chances which befell before he took her to wife.*



In this story there is no Benedick and no Beatrice, nor has any one as yet pointed out where in Italian literature Shakspeare found these two bright creatures, for they are plainly of Italian origin. Hero's story is sad enough, but it is not tragical, and it is rather commonplace; it does, however, furnish the shadows of a comedy as Shakspeare conceived comedy. Having decided upon his plot, meaning it for a main plot, I fancy the poet casting about for something bright to enliven it. And here at hand was a charming witty pair in a dramatic dialogue. All there was to do was to disguise the names of real persons, to make Beatrice Hero's cousin and give her Benedick for a lover. And with a fool or two, for Shakspeare dearly loved a fool, presto! a sparkling comedy fairly effervesces.

In the first place, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Shakspeare had read the *Courtyer*. It was a popular book, and popular precisely in that courtly set in which Shakspeare was fairly well established by 1600, the date of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Hoby's translation of *Il Cortegiano*, *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio*, appeared first in 1561, and three subsequent editions came out during Shakspeare's life, two of them, the editions of 1577 and 1588, before *Much Ado*. The edition of 1588 was printed in three languages, in parallel columns, Italian, in Italics, French, in Roman, and English in black letter. Florio, in his *Second Frutes*, published in 1591, mentions "Castilion's Courtier and Guazzo his dialogues" as the two books most commonly read by those who wanted to know a little Italian. Sidney Lee, in his recent *Life of Shakspeare*, concludes that to Shakspeare's "small Latin and less Greek" must be added a little Italian. He must have been able to read the language at least well enough to follow the thread of a tale, for Portia's story as he tells it in the *Merchant of Venice* was accessible to him only in the Italian story-book, *Il Pecorone*, of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino. So that if he had John Wolfe's trilingual edition of *Il Cortegiano* among his books, I do not

believe he used it for the purpose of learning a little Italian. I am sure he was fascinated by the bright dialogue in the black letter English. Except in Lyly's plays and in what he had already done himself, there was no such dialogue in English. Leaving Lyly's artificial style out of account, it is no disparagement of Shakspeare and not overpraise of Castiglione, to say, that up to the time of *Much Ado* Shakspeare had done nothing in dialogue that can be compared to the freedom and ease and grace of the *conversazioni* of *Il Cortegiano*. The Italians, taking the dialogue as a literary form from the ancients, had cultivated it until they were masters of dramatic colloquy, not indeed in their plays, but precisely in such courtly conversations as "Castilion's Courtyer and Guazzo his dialogues."

If Benedick and Beatrice are the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino and the Lady Emilia Pia, as I believe they are, there was absolutely nothing to do to the characters, for dramatic purposes, except to make them lovers, and there are indications even of that in the Courtyer.

In the first scene of the first act of *Much Ado*, when Beatrice is quizzing the messenger about Benedick, Lionato says,

"You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them."

The "merry war" between the Lady Emilia and the Lord Gaspare begins at once in the *Courtyer*:—

"So the daye after the Pope was departed, the companye beeing gathered to the accustomed place, after muche pleasant talke, the Dutchesse pleasure was that the Lady Emilia should beginne these pastimes: and she after a litle refusing of that charge, sayd in this maner: Syth it is your pleasure, Madam, I shall be she that must give the onsett in oure pastimes this night, bicause I ought not of reason disobey you, I thinke meete to propound a pastyme, whereof I suppose shall ensue little blame, and lesse travayle. And that shall be to have

every man, as nigh as he can, propounde a devyce not yet hearde of, then shall we chuse out such a one as shall be thought meete to be taken in hande in this companye.

"And after she had thus spoken, she tourned her unto the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino, willynge him to propounde his: who immediatlye made answer: "But first, Madam, you must beeginne to propound yours.

"Then saide the Lady Emilia: I have alreadye done. But your grace must commaunde him, Madam, to be obedient.

"Then the Dutchesse laughynge: To thintent, quoth she, every man shall obey you, I make you my deputy, and give unto you all mine aucthority.

"It is surely a great matter, aunswered the Lord Gaspar, that it is alwaies lawfull for women to have this privilege, to be exempt and free from paines taking, and truelye reason woulde we should in any wise knowe why"<sup>1</sup> (35).

Compare the Lady Emilia's turning first to the Lord Gaspare for his device, with Beatrice's opening speech, showing in what corner, for her, the wind sits,—

"I pray you, is Signior Montanto returned from the wars or no?" (i. 1).

So in the final skirmish of wit between them with which *Il Cortegiano* closes, the Lady Emilia, Beatrice-like, gets in the last word:—

"And as they were now passing out at the great chambre doore, the Lord Generall tourned hym to the Dutches, and said: Madam, to take up the variance beeteene the Lord Gaspar and the Lord Julian, (as to whether women could attain to the heavenly love or not,) we will assemble this night with the judge sooner than we did yesterdaye.

"The Lady Emilia answered: Upon condicion, that in case my Lord Gaspar wyll accuse women, and geve them, as his wont is, some false reporte, he wil also put us in

<sup>1</sup>The quotations throughout refer to the pages of *The Book of The Courtier. With Introduction by Walter Raleigh.* London, 1900. (*The Tudor Translations.*)

suretye to stand to triall, for I recken him a waveringe starter" (365).

When, in *Much Ado* (i. 1), Claudio questions Benedick about Hero, Benedick replies,—

"Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex."

Let us consider the Lord Gaspare as 'a professed tyrant to the sex.'

"Nowe the Lord Gaspar Pallavicino answered here smilinge: You to confirme your judgement with reason, alleage unto me women's doinges, which for the most part are voide of al reason. . . .

. . . . "Here manie began and in maner all, to speake againste the Lord Gaspar, but the Dutchesse made them all to houlde their peace. Afterward she said smilinge: If the yll which you speake of women were not so farr wide from the truth, that in speakinge it, it hurteth and shameth rather the speaker then them, I would suffer you to be answered" (144).

When Bibbiena, at one of Lord Gaspar's taunts at women, refers to the Magnifico as 'in every place the protector of women,' the Lady Emilia says, smiling,

"Women neede no defendoure againste an accuser of so small authoritie. Therefore let the Lord Gaspar alone in this his froward opinion, risen more because he could never finde woman that was willynge to loke upon him, then for anye want that is in women" (179).

Compare this with Beatrice's (*Much Ado*, i. 1.)

Beat. "Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed on as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

Bene. "Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

Beat. "A dear happiness to women : they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor."

Bernardo da Bibbiena observed that he did not know but that women endured patiently any sort of ill report, except that touching their honor.

"Then a greate parte of the women there, for that the Dutchesse had beckened to them so to doe, arose upon their feete, and ran all laughyng toward the Lord Gaspar, as they wold have buffeted him and done as the wood women did to Orpheus, saing continually : Now shall we see whether we passe to be yll spoken of or no. . . .

"But the Lord Gaspar said : See I pray you where thei have not reason on their side, they will prevaile by plaine force, and so end the communication, gevinge us leave to depart with stripes" (204).

The scene suggests Benedick's (*Much Ado*, ii. 1.)

"She told me that I was the Prince's jester, and that I was duller than a great thaw ; huddling jest upon jest, with such impossible conveyance, upon me, that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me."

At the close of the second book of the *Courtyer*, while they are choosing some one to lead the conversation on the Court lady, the Lady Emilia says,—

"Madam, I pray God it fall not to oure lott to give this enterprice to anye confederate with the Lord Gaspar, least he facion us for a gentilwoman of the Court, one that can do nought elles but looke to the kitchin and spinn" (206).

The Magnifico undertakes to fashion the Court lady, and does it so liberally, imagining such a bright, sweet, brave creature, possessing "the knowlege of all things in the world," together with "the vertues that so syldome times are seene in men," that the Lord Gaspar wonders why he will not have women to rule cities, to make laws, and to lead armies, while men stand spinning in the kitchen.

"The Lord Julian answered smiling : Perhaps this too were not amiss. Do you not know that Plato, which indeed

was not very friendly to women, giveth them the overseeing of cities?" (222).

The Lord Gaspar having asserted that women are a default of nature, the Magnifico argues that the *genus homo* includes both man and woman, and that therefore one sex alone cannot be an imperfection of nature, that Orpheus said that Jupiter was both male and female: "and it is read in Scripture that God facioned male and female to his likeness."

"I would not," said the Lord Gaspar, "we should entre into these subtil pointes, for these women will not understande us. . . . Yet sins we are entred into them, only this will I saye, that, as you know it is the opinion of most wise men, the man is likened to the Fourme, the woman to the Mattier: and therfore as the Fourme is perfecter than the Mattier, . . . so is the man much more perfect than the woman." . . .

Then the Lady Emilia, turning to the Lord Julian: "For love of God, quoth she, come once out of these your Mattiers and Fourmes and males and females, and speake so that you maye be understoode" (223).

To the Lord Julian's stories of noble women in ancient history, the Lord Gaspar cries: "Tushe, my Lord Julian, God woteth how these matters passed, for those times are so farr from us, that manye lyes may be toulde, and none there is that can reprove them" (244).

The "merry war" between Lady Emilia and Lord Gaspare is at its height in the Third Book, where the Magnifico is discussing the qualifications of the Court lady. But Gaspare, for all his chaff, is, like Benedick, eminently reasonable and practical, and so he is ready to admit that the Lord Julian "hath facioned this woman of the Palaice most excellent. And if perdee there be any suche to be found, I say she deserveth well to be esteemed equall with the Courtier" (271).

"The Lady Emilia answered: I will at all times be bounde to finde her, whan you finde the Courtier." The

repartee is of a piece with Beatrice's promise to eat all the enemy of Benedick's killing (i. 1).

The Lord Gaspar's whole attitude towards women, half in earnest, half banter, is quite in the vein of Benedick's gay, half serious mockery.

"That a woman was my mother, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but all women shall pardon me, because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none" (i. 1).

That Lord Gaspare and Lady Emilia enjoy the sparring, and have a kindly feeling towards each other is evident.

In the Fourth Book when Lord Gaspare interrupts to fling an irrelevant jibe at women, the Lady Emilia checks him, smiling:

"It is not in the Covenaut that ye shoulde a freshe fall to speake yll of women" (321).

Compare the reproof with Beatrice's first direct speech to Benedick (*Much Ado*, i. 1).

"I wonder you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you."

At the close of Bembo's inspired lyric on Platonic love, the Lord Cesare Gonzaga, who is a simple, downright sort of person, says: (363).

"The way that leadeth to this happiness is so stiepe that I beleave it will be much a do to gete to it." (Note the little phrase 'much ado' here; did it, together with his poor plot, suggest to Shakspeare the title of his play?)

"The Lord Gaspar said: I beleave it be harde to gete up for men, but unpossible for women.

"The Lady Emilia laughed and said: If ye fall so often to offende us, I promise you, ye shall be no more forgiven" (363).

So much for the play of the two characters, the one upon the other, which I think is strongly suggestive of Benedick and Beatrice.

It will be remembered that the scene of *Much Ado About Nothing* is laid in Messina, where Bandello puts it, and that Benedick is described as "a young Gentleman of Padua." The Lord Gaspare was of the noble and widely ramified family of the Pallavicini, who in the days of the republics shared with the Corregii the government of Parma. As a Lombard nobleman, Gaspare has a certain independence of character, a certain seriousness that gives weight and dignity to the conversations on the Courtyer. Probably the development of the dialogue depends more on him than on any one else, for he is not only always ready with inquiries, but he seems to pursue a subject furthest, as if he were bent on finding out all there was in it.

Speaking of love, in the Third Book, the Count of Canossa laughed, and said :

"But many times for overmuch love men committ great folies. . . .

"The Lord Cesar answered, smiling: Of good felowshippe let us not discover oure owne oversights.

"Yet we must discover them, answered the Lord Gaspar, that we maye knowe how to amende them" (283).

How like this is to Benedick's,

"Happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending" (*Much Ado*, ii. 3).

It is the seriousness underlying the character of Benedick that sets off his wit so finely. It is a more reflective kind of wit than Beatrice's, slower, more akin to wisdom. It is the young Lord Gaspare who says, "for knowleage commeth verye syldome times beefore yeeres" (340).

Benedick's mind penetrates at once to the clue of the conspiracy against Hero,—

"The practice of it lives in John the Bastard,  
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies." (iv. 1.)

He is too sincere a gentleman to swerve from the truth for an instant,—

"Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wrong'd." (iv. 1.)



Among other parallelisms of thought, I would recall that the Lord Gaspare's subject for the dialogue is the ideal woman, what virtues she must have, and what faults may be overlooked in her. Benedick (ii. 3) actually enumerates the graces a woman must have to come into his grace.

"Rich she shall be, that's certain ; wise, or I'll none ; . . . fair, or I'll never look on her ; mild, or come not near me ; noble, or not I for an angel ; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair—shall be of what colour it please God."

Again, in Book Third, the Lord Gaspar tells a story of a husband who asked leave of the Roman Senate to commit suicide, because he could not "abide the continuall weerisomnes of his wife's chattynges." Benedick "cannot endure my Lady Tongue." "I would to God some scholar would conjure her ; for, certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in Hell as in a sanctuary ; and people sin upon purpose, because they would go thither." (*Much Ado*, ii. 1).

It is easier to identify precisely the Lady Emilia Pia than the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino. She was sister of Margherita of Carpi, wife of Antonio Maria Sanseverino, one of the twelve Sanseverini brothers, "i gran Sanseverini," whom Castiglione had known at the Milanese court. Her father was Marco Pio, first cousin, once removed, of Alberto Pio, Lord of Carpi, who furnished Aldo Manuzio with the means to start his printing press. The pedigree of the brilliant Lady Emilia is most interesting, for Alberto Pio was the nephew of that paragon of learning and accomplishments, Giovanni Pico, Count of Mirandola, who was himself grand-nephew to Boiardo. The Lady Emilia came by her wit right nobly.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Beatrice is said to be the niece of Leonato, and cousin to Hero, but she is not the daughter of Leonato's brother, Antonio ; her parentage is not given. One of the gentlemen present at the conversa-

tions on the Courtyer is the Lord Lodovico Pio, but his relationship to the Lady Emilia is not stated, nor does he take any part in the dialogue. The Lady Emilia, like Beatrice, is a free lance.

In introducing her, it is said that she had such a lively wit and judgment that she "seemed the maistresse and ringe leader of all the companye, and that everye manne at her receyed understandinge and courage. There was then to be hearde pleasaunte communication and merye conceytes, and in every mannes countenance a manne myght perceyve peyncted a lovyng jocundenesse. So that thys house truelye myght well be called the verye mansion place of Myrth and Joye."

"And there will the Devil meet me, with horns on his head, and say: Get you to Heaven, Beatrice, get you to Heaven; here's no place for you maids: so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter; for the Heavens, he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long" (ii. 1).

Just the way in which the different gentlemen received "understandinge and courage" from the Lady Emilia is most skilfully managed. She chose the Count of Canossa to conduct the first evening's conversation, not, she says, because he has all that belongs to a good Courtyer at his fingers' ends, but because he will bring out all the pros and cons of the subject, and so give every one a chance to say something, whereas if a more skilful person were to undertake the theme, nothing would be said against him "for telling the truth." The Count makes them all laugh by the retort,

"We neede not feare, Madam, that we shal wante contrarying in wordes againste hym that telleth the truth, as longe as you bee here."

When the Count and Messer Federico are exchanging compliments as to which is the better wit, the Lady Emilia interrupts with,

"It is not the order that the disputation shoulde be con-

sumed upon your praise, it sufficeth ye are verie well knowen all."

For this speed of tongue, Bibbiena nicknames her, "Lady Emilia Impia."

One or two passages between her and Pietro Bembo are noteworthy. When Bembo demurs a little before speaking of Platonic love, the Lady Emilia says, "halfe in angre : There is never a one in al the company so disobedient as you be, Messer Peter, therfore shoulde the Dutchesse doe well to chastice you somewhat for it."

"Messer Peter said, smiling: For love of God, Madam, be not angrye with me, for I will say what ever you will have me."

"Goo to, saye on then," answered the Lady Emilia. And what a pretty picture of the two is this.

"When Bembo had hitherto spoken with such vehemencye, that a man woulde have thought him ravished and beeside himselfe, he stode still without once mooving, houldinge his eyes towarde heaven as astonied, whan the Lady Emilia, whiche together with the rest gave most diligent eare to this talke, tooke him by the plaite of hys garment and pluckinge hym a litle, said :

"Take heede, Messer Peter, that these thoughtes make not your soule also to forsake the bodye."

"Madam," answered Messer Peter, "it shoulde not be the first miracle that love hath wrought in me."

In one case, *Much Ado*, quotes the thought of the *Courtyer* outright. The rather futile Claudio, having won Hero in a roundabout way, through the suit of Don Pedro to her father, has nothing to say for himself. Beatrice thinks something should be said, and breaks in,—

Beat. "Speak, Count, 't is your cue;" whereupon Claudio says, "Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much" (ii. 1).

One of Castiglione's terse sentences is, "He that loveth much, speaketh little."

It may be objected to my theory of the origin of Benedick and Beatrice in the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino and the Lady Emilia Pia, that Shakspeare found the couple in the old play *Benedicte and Betteris*. We first hear of such a play in the Lord-Treasurer Stanhope's Account for 1613, thirteen years after *Much Ado About Nothing*. It is not at all unlikely that "Benedicte and Betteris" is a second title, as *Twelfth Night* has the variant, "*What You Will*." Halliwell says that Charles I. in his copy of the Second Folio, preserved in Windsor Castle, has added the name "Benedick and Beatrice" as a second title. Or, it may have been a popular title, from the best of the piece.

Leonard Digges says,—

let but Beatrice  
And Benedicke be seene, loe in a trice  
The Cockpit, Galleries, Boxes all are full.

But even if *Much Ado* is a refurbished older play, first heard of thirteen years after Shakspeare's comedy, there is nothing in that to hinder the older play's tracing to the *Courtyer*, though it would question Shakspeare's familiarity with Hoby's dialogue. I do not myself much believe in the older play, because *Much Ado* does not seem to me a remarkably well constructed drama, as it might have been if worked over by a good playwright, not to speak of a great one. It strikes me as loosely strung together, precisely as if it were made out of odds and ends, some very good material, as the wooing of Benedick and Beatrice, and Dogberry and the stupid watch, and the rest of it, Hero's story, mere stock in trade.

To sum up, I would submit,

First, that Benedick and Beatrice are plainly of Italian origin; in Italian literature the Lady Emilia is first seen in the Lady Pampinea of the *Decamerone*.

Second, that they do not belong to Hero's story in *Bandello*, and fit into it loosely in Shakspeare, precisely as if they did not belong to any story.

Third, that in *Much Ado* they are both detached persons, they have "just growed," precisely as the Lord Gaspare and the Lady Emilia appear in the *Courtyer*.

Fourth, that a comparison between the play and the dialogue shows remarkable coincidences in character, in action, in environment, in thought, and in language.

Fifth, that the very vividness of the representation is due to the fact that Benedick and Beatrice were originally real persons, the Lord Gaspare Pallavicino and the Lady Emilia Pia, of *Il Cortigiano*.

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